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THE QUESTION OF UNIVERSITIES IN FRANCE.

FOREIGNERS who come to complete their higher education in France — in 1890 there were more than a thousand of them in Paris, and nearly two hundred of these were North Americans — have at first much trouble in finding their way among the numerous schools, faculties and other establishments of higher education whose notices cover the walls of Paris at the end of October.¹ Shall they go to the Sorbonne, to the *Collège de France*, to the *École des Hautes Études* or to the *Muséum*? Their surprise is increased when they learn that besides these schools, which they may enter, there are others not open to the wayfaring scholar, the *École Normale* and the *École Polytechnique*. If, seeking a clue through this labyrinth, they ask: "Where is the University?" they are told that there is none. Among the faculties, schools and colleges there is no bond of union: they are not parts of a whole. This extraordinary variety of organs is not the result of a highly developed specialization of functions; for very many positions are duplicated. The explanation is historical. The existing state of things is the result of the successive creation of establishments of different types, all of which have held their own and are to-day in rivalry with one another. The *Collège de France* dates from Francis I; the Faculties from the First Empire; the *École des Chartes* from the Restoration; the *École des Hautes Études* from the Second Empire. The district of the Parisian schools, the "Latin Quarter," resembles a park in which new trees have continually been planted without uprooting the old trunks. These last have thrown out fresh shoots: new and old have both grown luxuriantly, and the park has become a tangled thicket. It is no wonder that foreigners lose their way in it, for the natives of the country

¹ *L'Alliance Française* announces (April, 1894) that it will henceforth publish annually, for the use of foreign and particularly of American students, a list of the professors engaged in higher instruction and of the courses offered by them.

cannot always find theirs. It is now proposed to run paths and open vistas through this wilderness.

For more than fifteen years a public agitation has been carried on by men of eminence in favor of the creation of universities in France. Two years ago a bill to this effect was submitted to the Senate by the minister of public instruction. Sooner or later some such law will be passed. It seems a fitting time to explain the real nature of this important question. The explanation involves a brief history of the higher education in France during the past hundred years.

I. *The Higher Education down to 1868.*¹

There are but two types of higher education — the special school and the university. The former is devoted to the cultivation of a particular science, and admits only so much of other sciences as is serviceable to its main purpose. The latter is open to all the sciences, to all branches of letters, uniting them all in a harmony that may be compared to that of the faculties of the human mind, or to that of the laws of nature.

In the middle ages France had famous universities, but they came to a bad end. Long before 1789 their four faculties had ceased to be centers of scientific activity. The faculties of theology, of law and of medicine actually fought against the spirit of science in behalf of the spirit of tradition. They had grown intolerant, and had clothed themselves in a spiny armor of Gothic prejudices. The only instruction they gave was narrowly professional. The faculty of arts made no provision for the advanced study of science and literature. It had lowered its plane to the work of preparatory and elementary instruction in rhetoric and the humanities. This decadence began at an early date. In the sixteenth century Francis I had sought to check it by setting up, face to face with the proud Sorbonne, where the faculty of theology had

¹ Cf. L. Liard, *Universités et Facultés* (Paris, 1890) and *L'Enseignement Supérieur en France*, vol. ii, 1789–1893 (Paris, 1894); H. Taine, *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine: Le Régime Moderne*, vol. ii (Paris, 1894); *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, March, 1892.

its seat, the equally famous *Collège de France*. This college was to be the refuge of pure, speculative, disinterested science.

The Revolution respected the *Collège de France*,¹ but swept away the four faculties which, taken together, still bore the name of University. In the place of these decrepit organizations, whose destruction was scarcely to be regretted, the philosophers of the Convention, Daunou, Condorcet and Talleyrand, proposed to establish "institutes"—vast scientific workshops, furnished with the necessary apparatus and endowment for free research in every direction. But their plans were not carried out. Under the pressure of circumstances and by way of provisional arrangement, another system was adopted—that of special schools. Attacking the most pressing problems, the Convention created the *Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle* to educate naturalists, the *École Polytechnique* to educate military engineers, and the *École de Santé* to educate physicians. Later, under the Consulate, special schools were established for law and for pharmacy. These also were strictly professional schools.

The Empire was hostile to science, because science is at once a result and an inspiring cause of liberty. The Empire had no use for independent personal views beside or beyond the Napoleonic orthodoxy. It was therefore bound to adopt and to intensify the special-school system which the Revolution had indeed established, but as a provisional arrangement only, and without abandoning the ideal of a better order. The Empire, it is true, resuscitated the Faculties, but in a thoroughly imperial form. The imperial Faculties were not connected; they were set to work each at a special task; they were principally busied with giving degrees. In spite of their name, they were organizations completely analogous to the special schools of the Convention. The Faculties of Medicine simply took the place of the *École de Santé* established by the Convention, and the Faculties of Law that of the law schools

¹ For the history of the *Collège*, see the excellent book by Abel Lefranc, *Histoire du Collège de France* (Paris, 1893) and the review of M. Lefranc's book by the present writer in *Revue Politique et Littéraire*, Feb. 17, 1894.

established under the Consulate. The *École Polytechnique*, the *Muséum* and the *École Normale* (a training school for teachers in the secondary schools) were preserved.

It is important to understand thoroughly the spirit and the results of the Napoleonic system, for it has weighed on France for nearly a century, and it is this system that we are struggling to get rid of to-day.

Society needs engineers, architects, physicians, lawyers, teachers, officials. The Napoleonic state undertakes to provide society with all these things — and this is the purpose of the special schools. It provides them finished, stamped and warranted — that is the purpose for which it keeps in its hands the giving of degrees. All that the state has to do is to make sure that each specialty which it furnishes to the consumers is a good and trustworthy article of its kind. It does not trouble itself to inquire whether the specialist is also a man of culture, whether he has tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge, whether he has learning or philosophy. It has placed at the threshold of the technical schools what seems to it a sufficient barrier : no one can enter them until he has pursued certain studies, until he has passed his examination for the bachelor's degree. In the view of the Napoleonic law-giver this degree — which simply certifies an elementary knowledge of Latin, Greek and French, with a smattering of history and logic — proves that he who has taken it has all the preliminary culture that is necessary in order to enter any of the so-called liberal professions. The government supposes that when the bachelor's degree has been taken, the general education is complete. In fact, it would view with suspicion any higher culture, any scientific curiosity, any sort of taste for research and discovery. This is precisely why it has a horror of the all-round universities after the German style, which aim to secure freedom of instruction and the untrammelled advancement of knowledge. This is why it seizes the young man without giving him time for reflection, at the very threshold of his life, and promptly shuts him up in one of the professional schools — Faculty of Law, Faculty of Medicine,

Normal School, Polytechnic School, *etc.* — which have for their single purpose to create, determine and guarantee in him a definite practical capacity. “I do not ask you,” said Napoleon to the masters of the Normal School, “to make me literary men, wits, ideologists ; make me governors.” “I do not ask you,” he might have said to his law professors, “to train sociologists ; make me attorneys, counselors and judges.” In medicine he would have similarly preferred practitioners to really scientific men.

The governments which have followed each other in France since the fall of the First Empire have not broken with its traditions in educational matters. The Napoleonic system has lasted ; it has moulded without hindrance one generation after another down nearly to 1870. One man indeed, in the reign of Louis Philippe, had the purpose to destroy it and to put in its place “great centers of study and of intellectual life.” This was M. Guizot ; but he was forced to abandon his plans, because he was not encouraged by public opinion to carry them through.

As regards the higher instruction, [he wrote] the public in my time had no desires whatever ; it was not preoccupied in this matter by any great idea or any impatient longing. . . . The advanced instruction, organized as it was and given as it was, was sufficient for the practical needs of society, which viewed it with a mixture of satisfaction and indifference.

Seventy years did not pass, however, without some changes in the details of the imperial organization.

(1) From time to time new and different special schools appeared. It had not occurred to Napoleon to provide for the manufacture of librarians and keepers of the archives ; the *École des Chartes* was established for this purpose in 1829. And when, at a more recent date, it was remarked that the history of art was taught nowhere in Paris, a special school for art history was promptly created, the *École du Louvre*. We have since witnessed the establishment of the *École des Sciences Politiques*, the *École Coloniale*, the *Institut Agronomique*, *etc.*

(2) A gradual change took place in the character of the instruction given in the special schools, and this change produced results which must be carefully noted. The special schools, in accordance with the spirit in which they were established, remained almost wholly professional down to the middle of the century. Although this system, in my opinion, was very inferior to that of the German universities, in that it sacrificed the highest culture for the sake of direct utilitarian purposes, it was still a defensible system; it was of great practical service. But this system began to be modified in a peculiar way, and not for the better, about fifty years ago.

Since the beginning of this century [says M. Hippolyte Taine] discoveries have rapidly increased in all branches of science, and these discoveries have, of necessity, finally forced their way into the system of public instruction. In their attempt to secure a place and speak *ex cathedra*, they found in Germany those encyclopedic universities in which a free, flexible and varied system of instruction constantly raises itself by its own efforts to the rising level of science. In our country, in default of universities, it was only in the special schools that a place could be found for these discoveries. As a result the distinctive character of these schools began to be changed. Each of them, because it had a distinct organization of its own, wished to have at home, and to furnish under its own roof, all the general and accessory instruction which could be of immediate or remote value to its students. It was no longer satisfied with turning out competent practitioners; it began to conceive of a higher type of physician, jurist, professor and architect. It became or tried to become a sort of university on a small scale, gathering within its walls all the subjects of instruction which, if the student profits by them, will make him an accomplished member of his profession.¹

Let us now consider the consequences of this evolution of the special schools towards a more complete and more theoretic teaching than they originally gave. The first result was a great increase in the number of chairs and, at the same time, a duplication of positions. Instead of one great university, there were as many little universities as there were schools. A further result was the overloading of the curricula of these

¹ Le Régime Moderne, p. 269.

schools. In a school with a fixed curriculum and a fixed number of regular pupils (boarders), every subject of instruction has to be backed up by an examination; the student enters the school, stays in the school and graduates from the school only by virtue of examinations; his anxiety about his examinations is necessarily so acute that it shuts out all other ideas. As a last result we have the extraordinary fact, that after three, four or five years of study in a professional school—and very hard study, too, on account of constant cramming for examinations—the student leaves it with a very respectable outfit in the way of theoretic knowledge, but with absolutely no practical experience. In his three years of study in the Normal School, the future professor has never once taught a class; in his two years of study in the Polytechnic School and his three additional years in the *École des Ponts et Chaussées*, the future engineer has never directed a squad of workmen or seen a bridge built. The doctor of laws, in his five years of special training, has never set foot in a court of justice. Not one of these men knows his trade, and they all think they know it—a delusion that is often dangerous as well to themselves as to others.

To sum up: the young men of France who propose to enter the liberal professions are shut up in special schools. These schools are established to give a technical education, and they still pretend to give it. But by depriving the student of all the teaching that is derived from personal experience and outside life, these schools sterilize him; by loading him with examinations, they exhaust him; by cramming him with theories (and often with useless theories), they intoxicate him with dangerous illusions and frequently unfit him for the positive and practical work of his after life. Nor is this all. While these special schools have ceased, since 1850, to turn out practitioners, they do not furnish anything like as favorable a soil for the development of scientific capacity as would have been furnished by a real university with freely elective courses. A graduate of the Polytechnic School is a poor engineer, but he is not on that account a scientific man. A graduate of the

Normal School is a teacher without experience, but he is as little fitted to carry on an investigation as to teach a class. Both have their minds stuffed with any quantity of elementary theories, but they have never got to the bottom of a single one. They know many (too many) things which a practitioner can afford not to know, and they do not know the things which they need to know ; but for all that, they have no notion whatever of the spirit or methods of scientific investigation.

A final stroke will complete the sketch of the changes which Frenchmen of this generation have witnessed. The special schools, like living organisms, have grown with age ; hence the multiplication of their chairs of which I have spoken above. At the same time they have struck root deep in the national life. Everywhere in Europe the university student is a popular personality ; he is concerned in all liberal and patriotic demonstrations. Now since, during the greater part of the century, there have been no real university students in France, the students in the schools have played this part and reaped its advantages. The uniform of the Polytechnic School shone in the front ranks during the revolutionary conflict of 1830 ; the Normal School was a hot-bed of opposition to the Second Empire, and has been a center of antagonism to clericalism under all forms of government. The French middle class, of which a notable part is now connected with graduates of the special schools, regards these schools with affection and respect. Its dearest ambition is to put its sons through them ; its liveliest astonishment would be aroused if any one dared to lay a sacrilegious hand upon them. There are many people in France to whom "normal-school graduate" is the synonym for a man of letters, and "polytechnic graduate" for a man of science. From the rich soil of favoring prejudices the special schools draw a strength and sap which have secured them and will long continue to secure them against destruction and even reform. It should be added that among nearly all the graduates of these schools, instincts of solidarity and of comradeship form an exceedingly strong bond of union. The "old students," who to-day hold high positions in the

state, would hardly permit any interference with their schools.

(3) While the special schools were thus growing in size and in strength, and passing through the evolution I have just described, what had become of the Faculties? I do not allude to the Faculties of Law and of Medicine, which were really special schools under a deceptive name, but to the Faculties of Science and of Letters, which were almost the only organizations in the Napoleonic system capable of development into scientific *university* organizations.

These Faculties were charged with the giving of degrees, but they were not required to give technical instruction. The time which they did not employ in holding examinations, they might have been expected to employ in speculative and original investigations. In order to explain why they did nothing of the sort, it is necessary to consider their position, their resources and their opportunities during the first fifty years of their existence. These were wretched beyond belief. Badly furnished and inadequate buildings, no libraries, no laboratories, no apparatus! No students even; for nearly all the possible students were studying in the special schools. Five or six chairs only in each Faculty; so that the same professor was almost everywhere charged, in natural science, with the triple burden of zoölogy, botany and geology; in letters, with the teaching of universal history and universal geography. Wealthy France did not spend a million francs a year on her Faculties; on the contrary, the examination fees collected by these Faculties more than covered their expenses and turned a yearly surplus into the treasury of the state.

What could a professor in one of these Faculties do with his time in the intervals between examinations? Having neither books nor students, he could not dream of organizing scientific workshops like those of the German universities. He had and could have but one ambition: to attract and hold the greatest possible number of amateur hearers by a lively and agreeable style of lecture. The lecture rooms were warm in winter,

cool in summer. This was already one reason why persons without other occupation should come to keep warm or cool, according to the time of year. There are, moreover, in the provincial towns as well as in Paris, many persons with vague scientific or literary interests who are ready to kill time in listening to lectures; and finally there are the women who have nothing to do. These audiences of women, dilettantes and loafers lavish applause upon those who amuse them; but the slightest attempt to make them listen to the austere voice of science and learning puts them to flight. To please and flatter these people, to win their approval—this unfortunately was the whole effort of the Faculty professors. If they scorned such cheap applause they were left in isolation and were regarded as devoid of ability.

I shall never forget [says M. Liard] what happened to me at the beginning of my work in the Faculty of Bordeaux. During the winter, all went well; my hearers were numerous and seemed attentive. In the spring there was no serious falling off. But when the summer came, they nearly all disappeared. And what was the reason? At the hour at which my lectures were delivered there were, in summer, weekly parades of the troops. The regiments passed before the Faculty building just as the lecture was beginning. At the first distant notes of the approaching bugles and drums, the audience filed out, followed the music, and never came back.¹

These circumstances developed in the French Faculty professors the national fault of empty, ornate and superficial eloquence, such as pleases the half-educated public. I certainly do not mean to say that during this period the members of the Faculties did not produce some excellent works, like *La Cité Antique* of M. Fustel de Coulanges; but such achievements were very exceptional. Outside of Paris the Faculties did nothing for half a century but furnish passing entertainment to idlers and blue-stockings. In Paris itself the same causes would have produced precisely the same results, if the stage had not been broader, the public larger and the masters men of more unusual talent. The extraordinary brilliancy of

¹ Universités et Facultés, p. 22.

the instruction given in the Sorbonne by such professors as Cousin, Guizot and Villemain partly disguised its inadequacy. Towards 1840, the lectures of the Paris Faculty of Letters at the Sorbonne, supported and stimulated by the Liberal party, were among the most ringing utterances of the thought of France. The eloquence of a few great men enabled them to exercise, from their professional chairs, a marked influence upon their time. Ever since then it has been understood that a professor in one of the Faculties must be "eloquent." A great part of the French middle class still regards the Faculty professor as a man who talks well and holds examinations, but not at all as a scientific man.

To sum up: it seems to me that the condition of the higher instruction in France before 1870, was analogous, *mutatis mutandis*, to the condition of the English universities. Everybody knows that, from the fifteenth century down to a very recent period, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were divided into a swarm of independent colleges; that these colleges were rich, provided with princely buildings and libraries, with teaching bodies and with students; that in both cities the university proper was comparatively poor, had hardly any students of its own ("non-collegiate" students), and almost no professors; that the professors whom it had retained preached in the desert; that the only actual instruction was given inside the jealously closed colleges. The university, once a living reality and a teaching power, was reduced to a majestic abstraction—a convenient designation for the totality of the real entities, the colleges. It had kept in its hands only a general staff of dignitaries, some buildings, and the bestowal of degrees. Now, is there not a structural resemblance between this system and the Napoleonic organization in France? The Faculties of Letters and of Science correspond perfectly, from a morphologic point of view, to the English university: they also have dignitaries who wear historic costumes, and they have the bestowal of degrees; but they have no students, and their teaching is a fiction, for the real instruction is given in the

special schools—the Normal School, *etc.*—which roughly correspond to the English colleges.

In the last twenty years the universities of Oxford and Cambridge have regained a considerable part of their old vitality at the expense of the colleges. I have now to explain what has been done in France to remedy the unfortunate state of affairs described above.

II. *The Reform of the Higher Education.*

The Napoleonic system, in spite of some timid and isolated protests, remained substantially unchanged until 1868. The first suggestions of reform date from this period and from the ministry of M. Duruy. This minister started an investigation into the condition of the higher instruction in France, and invited competent persons to express their views freely. The investigation proved both the inadequacy of the system in force and the clear-sightedness of some of those who were living under it

The university spirit [said M. Chéruel, rector of Strasburg] is everywhere extinguished. . . . Knowledge, divided like fractional currency, has been distributed in little sums, and the restricted schools multiply to the detriment of the great ones.¹

The result of this investigation was not an internal transformation of the Faculties, nor the suppression of any of the special schools, but, surprising as it seems at first, the establishment of a new organization independent of all those which previously existed, and which were left as they were. This new organization was the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*. “I am planting,” M. Duruy said to his confidants, “within the walls of the old Sorbonne, seeds which in growing will completely wreck it.” M. Duruy, in fact, considering the Faculties incapable of discharging the scientific functions of the higher instruction, established in the Sorbonne, side by side with the Faculties, a new body entrusted with the discharge of these functions. He judged that “from this

¹ Liard, *L'Enseignement Supérieur*, ii, 283.

organization, with which the Faculties were henceforth to live in contact, the scientific spirit would filter into them by a gradual exosmosis."

The *École des Hautes Études*, in distinction from all the other schools, is an "open" school, in that it is not necessary to pass any examination for entrance; but it is closed to transitory auditors, for it is necessary to be matriculated in order to follow its courses. It subserves the same purpose as the *seminaria* in the German universities. Its *conférences* are workshops, in which masters and students work together, in an informal and friendly fashion, at scientific problems. After three years of attendance and the presentation of an original dissertation which proves experience and erudition, the student obtains, without any other sort of examination, the diploma of "certified graduate" (*élève diplômé*) of the school. "No program is imposed upon the masters: it is only required that they be competent directors of the workshop and that they train good workmen in science."

This school, founded in 1868, was at first divided into four sections: (1) the mathematical sciences; (2) the physico-chemical sciences; (3) the natural sciences; (4) the historical and philological sciences. A fifth section, that of the religious sciences, was established later, after the suppression of the Faculties of Catholic Theology. This means that the *École des Hautes Études* to-day constitutes a complete university. And if the word is taken (as I think it should be taken) to describe an institution where science is cultivated for its own sake, without asking what it is good for or what it leads to, this school is really the university of Paris. Foreigners are not deceived on this point: it is the only institution in Paris which they attend in large numbers; it is the only place in that city where Germans, Russians, Swedes, *etc.*, find something like what they have at home; and it is very fortunate that foreigners are thus attracted to the school, for were it reduced to having only Frenchmen as students, it would not have many. Since it prepares for no career, it is ignored by the French public; since the diploma which it confers has no

legal value, and since public opinion gives it no such moral value as German opinion attaches to the doctorate of philosophy, very few persons try for it. The *École des Hautes Études* is really, like the *Collège de France*, and for the same reasons, a university without students.

We may congratulate ourselves that when M. Duruy founded this school, he had little money to dispose of ; for, had he had the money, a large sum would probably have been expended in the erection of a suitable building. It would then have been a second *Collège de France*, an indestructible institution, rooted to the soil. Fortunately, on account of the lack of money, the school was housed in a haphazard way in the garrets of the Sorbonne, and it has always preserved a character of unsubstantiality. It is simply a collection of scientific men, among whom the sense of solidarity and the egoism that characterize all old corporations have not developed. As soon as the Faculties resume the university functions which they have too long neglected, the *École des Hautes Études* can readily merge itself in them and disappear.

The purpose of M. Duruy in creating this school was, as we have seen, not to destroy the other institutions of higher instruction by means of its rival attractions—that would have been a rash undertaking—but to plant a tree whose seeds in time would scatter themselves over all the surrounding fields. As a matter of fact, the scientific spirit of the *École des Hautes Études* has exercised a beneficent influence. If the Faculties are to-day partly awakened, this result is due in some degree to the good example of the school founded by M. Duruy.

We must now briefly consider the evolution of the Faculties from the fall of the Empire to the present time. The outcome of the war of 1870 compelled France to search her conscience as a first step towards regeneration. Eminent men, MM. Renan, Bréal, Monod, Lavissee, undertook to enlighten the public on educational matters. There was no doubt, in their opinion, that the worthlessness of our higher education was one of the causes of our decadence. “It is German science,” said M. Renan, “that won the day at Sadowa and at Sedan.”

It was brought home to us that the German national spirit was a product of the German universities, and the German fatherland a product of this spirit. "From this moment," to use an expression of M. Liard, "the reform of the system of the Faculties became in France a matter of patriotism." It had needed this terrible shock to disturb public opinion.

The most imperative needs were first considered. The Faculties, as we have seen, had neither buildings, nor appropriations, nor libraries, nor laboratories, nor a sufficient staff of professors. It was necessary to give them all these, at whatever pecuniary sacrifice. There is good cause to admire the resources that were exhibited by a vanquished and exhausted country; it expended them without hesitation to do all that could be done with money for the reform of higher education. In 1871, the appropriation for the Faculties was 4,300,000 francs; in 1877 it had been increased to 7,799,810 francs. In 1889 it amounted to 11,391,495 francs. Since 1877 there have been established 67 professorships, 168 supplementary lectureships and 129 readerships (*maîtrises de conférences*), making a total addition to the teaching force of 364 persons. The amount paid or pledged for the construction of buildings, laboratories, *etc.*, rose to more than 99 millions, of which 47 millions were furnished by the state and 52 millions by the cities. Before 1879 there were no university libraries. To-day these libraries have more than a million volumes. France is now spending almost as much money on her Faculties as Prussia is spending on her universities.

Has this immense outlay been rewarded by the desired results? Without money, of course, no progress was possible; but money is not all that is needed. Money is like a fertilizer; plants grow badly without it, but it will not develop good plants from seeds organically poor. We have already seen that the higher instruction in France was organically bad. It remains to inquire whether it has been improved in proportion as the conditions have become more favorable.

If the problem were to be approached from a purely rational point of view, without regard to the actual circum-

stances which impede a logical solution, the reestablishment of universities in France would require three radical and even revolutionary changes, and these would have to be carried through simultaneously.

(1) *Suppression of the special schools.*— Besides the fact that the special schools absorb every year very large sums of money, they also absorb the most promising students. To restore to the Faculty of Science the youth whom the Polytechnic School now secures; to restore to the Faculty of Letters those who now attend the Normal School—will be a sure means of giving life to these Faculties. Moreover, from the day when the Faculties assume their proper position, there will be no reason for prolonging the existence of the *École des Hautes Études* or even of the *Collège de France*; they can then be dissolved and disappear. In fact none of the schools in France need be preserved except those in which some very practical and technical branches of knowledge are taught, and that after the student has received a general education at the university. It is very clear that the artillery schools and those of mining and of military science will continue; those schools only will be suppressed which, despite their pretense of giving a special, professional education, have ceased to be special, and, as has already been explained, have become imperfectly developed, bastard universities.

(2) *Suppression of state examinations.*— The Faculties should award only those degrees which, like the doctorate of foreign universities, are purely academic, and which will not give one the right to practice a profession. If the bestowal of state degrees is left to the Faculties, preparation for examination will inevitably become the chief business of students and professors. The programs of these examinations will determine the instruction given; science will be robbed of all liberty of effort and of guidance. If it is felt that the state is bound to attach conditions to the practice of certain professions—teaching, medicine, law, *etc.*—state examinations having those things in view will be held outside the Faculties. The system of state examinations, to which no one is admitted

except those furnishing evidence of a certain period of residence in the universities, is in operation, as is well known, in Germany.

(3) *The union of the Faculties of each city into an autonomous university.* — Faculties which are well endowed, which have students, which are free to cultivate at their ease and according to their taste the vast field of knowledge, should be united and form a moral person, a corporation, a body animated with a truly individual life. "*Qui dit facultés dit les puissances d'une même âme.*" The university is the bar of metal formed by the close welding of the Faculties. At the same time the universities should enjoy a certain autonomy. Hitherto all the Faculties of France have obeyed the word of command issued from the bureau of the ministry of public instruction at Paris. Hereafter they should exist freely within the bosom of free universities, beyond the control of a representative of the state, which, nevertheless, should retain the right of inspecting them, because it provides for their support.

Not one of the three articles of this reasonable program has yet been carried into effect. Not one of the reforms here proposed could be at once realized without profoundly disturbing the prejudices and habits of the nation. No one as yet dares to proclaim himself openly an advocate of the first two; and the third, despite the great caution of its defenders and the warm support of the government, has been adjourned *sine die*, that is to say, pushed to one side by the Senate. Is this equivalent to saying that for fifteen years nothing has been done toward the accomplishment of the reform desired and predicted by all the best minds of France? Assuredly not. Consult the statistics. The scientific Faculties *par excellence*, the Faculties of Letters and of Science, had not a single student in 1869. To-day the Faculties of Science count 1900 regular students; those of Letters, 3400. The number of doctorates and licentiates annually conferred by these Faculties has quadrupled. Whence do these 5000 students come? What are they doing? What changes does their presence indicate? What is to-day the actual status

of the question as to the future of the university corporations in France?

1. *Recent development of the Faculties.* — The Faculties, enriched and strengthened by the bounty of the state, have devoted themselves first to procuring a body of listeners different from that with which they were previously content. The beginnings, which date only from yesterday, were very modest. In 1877 the Paris Faculty of Letters began to matriculate students in letters, a new sort of students, no specimens of which had before existed. The number registered was six. Of these four had scholarships, and it seems that there was some difficulty in procuring these incumbents. We have preserved the paper on which they wrote their replies to the questions asked at the head of the column, for example to this: Does he accept the scholarship? It was as if a favor was asked of them. The partisans of the old system did not fail to smile at these students whose consent to attend lectures had to be purchased, and who yielded it even then with some ceremony. To-day the Paris Faculty of Letters alone has 1200 students instead of six. Of this number those who hold scholarships, *i.e.*, those whom the state pays for being students, amount to only a fiftieth of the whole number. The scholarships are no longer freely offered, but are awarded competitively, and are the object of the ambition of all gifted young men. The same is true, allowance being made for different conditions, in the provincial Faculties.

The Faculties have not forcibly wrested from other institutions the thousands of students who throng and invigorate them to-day. They have merely worked veins which before were neglected. Previous to 1877 no one who wished to become a teacher could hope for an appointment except through the Normal School, which received forty pupils annually. The Faculties admitted to their courses those who had not been able to enter the Normal School, those who had not wished to enter it — in a word, all who were candidates for their degrees. They were content with preparing students to pass the higher

examinations, and announced that in future they would perform this work. Thus in a short time they gathered about them the youth who had been left without guidance and instruction. Fifteen years have passed, and already from the classes opened by the Paris Faculty to prepare students for its degrees, hundreds of professors have been graduated. The day is near when the majority of the professors in the *Lycées* of France will be men who have studied under the Faculties of Letters and Science—Faculties which not long ago were destitute of students. The Normal School has thus unexpectedly met, in its own field, with the sharpest competition.

The effect of this competition on the Normal School, it may be observed in passing, has been very remarkable. Its function was originally to train teachers for secondary schools, but that justification for its existence has disappeared, since the Faculties now train a larger number of such teachers and train them fully as well. No one has argued from this that the Normal School should be suppressed; but already, in order to justify its continued existence, some have declared that it should cease to be a mere training school, where candidates are prepared for professional examinations. "It should be a retreat where a select body shall be initiated into the enjoyment of the highest intellectual pleasures and the employment of good methods." According to one of his recent biographers, the late M. Fustel de Coulanges vehemently rejected the opinion of those who would confine the work of the school to the turning out every year of forty professors for the *Lycées*. He desired that it might be *a school of high, free and liberal studies*.

A school of high, free and liberal studies ! The idea is worthy of all approval; but the Faculties are quite ready to follow the Normal School upon this new ground. If the awarding of degrees, joined with brilliant courses of public lectures, failed to satisfy their ambition in the past, the preparation for degrees, to which they have so successfully devoted themselves since 1877, fails to satisfy them now. They willingly undertook this work because it was useful and because it

served to attract students ; but they would be very sorry to be forced to keep it up indefinitely. The pursuit of science for its own sake is now their dearest desire. It could easily be shown that never, even in the critical period when they were trying to make for themselves a place, have the Faculties lost sight of their real object. As the years have passed, the exhortations of such leaders as M. Lavissee, who are in some sort their spokesmen, to free, original, disinterested work, have become more and more urgent ; and the training work with which they began is giving place, more and more, to scientific work. In the first period of their evolution — the pedagogic period — the Faculties turned out professors by the legion. In the second phase of their development, which has been predicted from the outset, the domains of advanced science will be filled with workers who have obtained their training at the Sorbonne. In the present state of international science, every institution of higher instruction which fails to pass out of the first of these phases will condemn itself to death. Under the spur of competition the Normal School has come to understand this truth. The Faculties have recognized it, and have been guided by it for fifteen years.

A very simple reform, therefore, will suffice to give the Faculties of Letters and of Science an organization corresponding to that of the philosophical faculties of the German universities and to make them capable of performing the same services. They have now both students and resources. It only remains for them to direct their energy and that of their students to the cultivation of pure science. They are still too much absorbed in the work of preparing for examinations for the degrees of licentiate and *agrégé* — examinations poorly conceived and combined, artificial and scholastic. Let the programs of these examinations be changed, — and nothing is easier to effect than a change of program, — let the rules be so modified as to require for the coveted degrees of licentiate, *agrégé* and doctor a taste of the fruits of the tree of knowledge, and everybody will soon be tasting them. As soon as the licentiate can be obtained from the French Faculties in the same

way as the degree of doctor of philosophy is obtained at the German universities there will be in France as many vigorous centers of higher instruction as there are Faculties. All that is needed to bring about so desirable a result is a modification of the programs for the licentiate and other examinations.

Let us suppose this change accomplished. There will then be no reason for the continued existence of the *École des Hautes Études*. It will either be merged with the Faculties, or it will be affiliated to them and will specialize in certain outlying domains of science which the Faculties themselves have not yet cultivated. Already, in fact, the mathematical, physical and chemical sections of the *École des Hautes Études* are attached to the Paris Faculty of Science. But how will it be with the Normal School? One of two things will happen: either it will become the school of high, free and liberal studies of which M. Fustel de Coulanges spoke — and then its situation will be just the same as that of the *École des Hautes Études*, a similar fate awaiting it sooner or later; or else it will become a school of pedagogics, a special school for the application of the pedagogical sciences to practice, which one will not enter till after he has passed through the Faculties.¹ Let it be noted that these results are really inevitable; that these simplifications, so desirable in themselves, are the necessary result of the evolution which is already in progress.

Finally, the state has (unintentionally) come to the aid of the Faculties, and secured for them a new and very considerable body of students. The military law of 1889 imposes three years of service in the barracks upon all young men who have not passed through a special school or received the degree of licentiate from a Faculty. Those who have fulfilled these conditions need serve under the flag only a single year. Such an exemption from two years of service must prove a very strong

¹ As to the *Collège de France*, Ferdinand Lot remarks: "As soon as the Faculties become what they ought to be, it will be impossible to find any reason for the separate existence of the *Collège de France*; it will be seen that its chairs should be transferred to the Sorbonne." — *L'Enseignement Supérieur en France: ce qu'il est; ce qu'il devrait être* (Paris, 1892), p. 64.

attraction, and will assuredly bring to the Faculties a steady stream of recruits from the best elements in France.

2. *The establishment of universities.* — In comparison with the natural and spontaneous course of development of which I have spoken, — a development which must soon change the character of the instruction given in the faculties, — the reform concerning which a few words must now be said is of only secondary importance. The fact that this reform alone has been fortunate enough to attract public attention and to find an echo in the debates of parliament does not affect the truth of the statement I have just made.

The proposed reform has to do with the grouping of the regenerated Faculties into autonomous universities. The idea is sufficiently old ; it goes back to a time when the Faculties had not yet emerged from the condition of nothingness into which the Napoleonic system had plunged them. The Waddington ministry, which fell May 16, 1877, had nearly perfected a bill for the establishment of provincial universities. After the overthrow of this ministry, its project was forgotten. It was reserved for M. Bourgeois, minister of public instruction in 1892, to bring it before the Senate and secure its discussion.

From 1877 to 1892, however, the way was prepared for the creation of universities, and that with a wisdom worthy of all praise, by men devoted to this reform. In 1885 M. Jules Ferry said, with much truth, that in such a matter the law follows rather than creates custom, and that it would be a mistake, perhaps irreparable in its consequences, to give legal form to a thing whose reality was still doubtful.

Are the customs [he inquired], without which university life would be a fiction and an illusion, sufficiently established to call to-day for the sanction of law? As soon as the state shall establish universities, it will, so far as they are concerned, divest itself of a part of its powers. . . . Ought it to do this before a decisive experience has fully justified the step? And for the future universities themselves, can there be any better fortune, any surer pledge of their success, than to come in their own good time, summoned by the force of facts, instead of leaping suddenly into existence as the creatures of abstract law?

In accordance with this view M. Jules Ferry, during his ministry, submitted to the consideration of all the Faculties of France a series of questions touching the establishment in France of universities analogous to those of other countries of Europe. The documents resulting from this inquiry have been printed in the sixteenth volume of the *Enquêtes relatives à l'Enseignement Supérieur*. The opinion of a great majority of the Faculties being favorable, a preliminary decree was published, December 28, 1885. This decree, issued by the government with the approval of the superior council of public instruction, did not create universities, — it would have needed a law to do that, and the moment was not deemed opportune for taking such a step, — but it established in each academic center a preliminary and organic grouping of Faculties. These bodies were brought nearer together; a relation of solidarity was established between them; they were again intrusted with the care of their general interests; they were called to a life beyond their own special sphere, a life common to all; and as the organ of this common life, above their special councils, they were given a general council, a kind of university senate, consisting almost wholly of elected members, the deans and representatives of each Faculty, and presided over by the rector as representative of the state and guardian of the law. In other words, the decree of 1885 united the separate Faculties of each city into a homogeneous and living whole, lacking only that which the Chambers alone could confer — the name and the civil status of a university. "In fact," as an eminent person said recently, "the French universities have existed since 1885, and when the law shall interpose, it will be, not to create, but to confirm and sanction."¹

It appears then how methodically and with what consistency this whole movement has been conducted. There has been no undue haste. There has been no desire carelessly to bestow the great name of university upon a group of Faculties before they have made themselves worthy of the name. Upon them has been bestowed the organic liberty of a common life, and in

¹ Liard, *L'Enseignement Supérieur en France*, II, 417.

1885 it was said to them : "Live, manage your own affairs ; if you do that well, the name of university will be your reward."

The experiment has continued for seven years, and it has succeeded beyond all expectation. The Faculties have become accustomed to living together ; their instructors and students have begun to know each other and to fraternize. In all the cities where Faculties exist there are to-day general associations of students, very prosperous and very useful ; and with those at Paris the pupils of the special schools have begun to affiliate. These associations have invited the students of foreign universities to their *fêtes*, and delegations from the university corporations of England, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland have taken part in the celebrations recently held for the inauguration of the New Sorbonne, and on the occasion of the sixth centenary of the old University of Montpellier. The idea, the thought, the name of university, for so long a time obliterated in France, have won a remarkable popularity, especially in certain provincial cities — Lyons, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Nancy, Montpellier. "In Lyons, for example, in the press, in society and even among the working people, they speak off-hand of the University of Lyons ; they have faith in its future and in its services."¹ In the New Sorbonne, beneath the beautiful fresco by Puvis de Chavannes, in that magnificent *aula* which may well be an object of envy to all the universities of Europe, may be read, and not in anticipation of the reality, these words, written in letters of gold: *Université de Paris*.

It was under these very favorable conditions, and after the long and prudent work of preparation which I have outlined, that a bill for the establishment of universities in France was submitted to the Chambers at the beginning of the year 1892. It was approved by the majority of a committee of the Senate, which included five or six former ministers of public instruction ; it came up for debate in the month of March ; and it met with the coolest reception. So disagreeable and unexpected a result requires explanation.

¹ See L. Legrand, *Les Universités Françaises et l'Opinion* (Paris, 1893).

The project came to grief because of a combination of different sorts of opposition, which it is very instructive to enumerate and to distinguish.

(a) In all political assemblies of France, even to-day, there exists a party, numerically small but cherishing with great obstinacy its regrets for the past — the Conservative or Reactionary party. Strongly attached to the interests of the Catholic Church, this party is hostile *a priori* to every measure that tends to strengthen secular or state instruction at the expense of “free instruction” — that is to say, at the expense of the “Catholic Universities” which have lately been established by private initiative in some of the cities of France. By character and tradition the Reactionary party was bound to view with disfavor a bill which would strengthen the position of the state Faculties.

(b) Very numerous — much more numerous than the Catholics — in the French assemblies, are the Jacobins, that is to say, the men who are attached to the system of excessive centralization which was established by the Revolution and continued by the Empire. The public law of the Revolution and of the Empire assumes that there is no place in the modern state for special, permanent and self-governing bodies, deriving their income from property held in mortmain and discharging services of a public nature, — especially if their service be the giving of instruction ; for the state has taken to itself the monopoly of instruction. The sole and comprehensive “University of France” created by Napoleon excluded free, local universities. To found such universities, the Jacobins think, is to destroy the unity of the University of France — of this public corporation made in the image of the nation, one and indivisible, and designed to uphold national unity by a common system of education, inspired by a uniform spirit.

If the Jacobins, priests of the religion of centralization, would discuss the question, it might be demonstrated to them that the rights of the state would not be imperiled by the founding of local universities. It might be shown that such universities would not be states within the state, but merely organs of the state, endowed with all necessary independence

for the discharge of the highest moral functions of the state. French unity would not be compromised by permitting local universities to develop special features in the various provinces. But the Jacobins would not be convinced by these arguments, and their hostility to the plan of M. Bourgeois was as certain from the outset as that of the reactionists.

(c) It was also very probable that the plan would be regarded with disfavor by the members of Parliament who were attached to the special schools, either as members of the teaching force or as "old graduates." The establishment of real universities, to speak frankly, implies the disappearance, after a brief period, of special schools other than those of a technical character. The bill also contemplated "the union with the future universities of great establishments for higher instruction which till now have enjoyed an independent existence." "What are the institutions which you covet?" exclaimed M. de Rozière to the Senate, March 14, 1892. "You have not said, and this silence produces among all a uniform and legitimate feeling of anxiety. . . . Have you foreseen that they will oppose the incorporation by which they are menaced with the resistance of despair?"

This opposition is very dangerous, because of the firmly established reputation of the special schools among the *bourgeoisie*, who, until 1880, were not accustomed to hear any other institutions mentioned. Twenty years more must pass before a generation will arrive at the age of manhood which has tested for itself the superiority of the system of free, scientific, university education over that of the closed schools. The leading opponents, in the Senate, of the plan which has been so long and so tenderly cherished by the Faculties of France, were MM. Challemel-Lacour and de Rozière. One of them spoke in the name of the *Collège de France* and the *École des Chartes*, the other in behalf of the Normal School. Every one understands the grounds of their opposition. It is the anxiety of these three institutions and of their former students, that has postponed till the Greek calends the solution of a problem which we believed was almost solved.

(*d*) I may add here that the government made a serious tactical mistake. It could count on some devoted supporters ; besides those whom its arguments convinced, it was sure of the vote and the support of the representatives of the cities which were designated as the seats of the future universities. But in a light-hearted way, and by reason of a theoretic scruple—a scruple of questionable justice but of unquestionable inexpediency—it alienated a part of this vote.

There exist in France fifteen groups of Faculties. If the government had proposed to create fifteen universities, the bill, thanks to the vanity of the local members, would have been assured of a majority. But, on the contrary, the government was careful to proclaim the fact that “all the groups of Faculties could not pretend to the honor of becoming universities.” By this course it lost the support of the representatives of the weaker groups.

The motives which actuated the authors of the bill were certainly very exalted. They feared a waste of educational force. It is nothing to create Faculties, said V. Cousin ; what is necessary is to make them great and strong. To scatter them is to destroy them. This is undoubtedly a sound principle. What a nation needs is a small number of great centers of learning. By multiplying them you lower the character of the instruction and diminish the number of the students. There are, it is true, twenty-one universities in Germany;¹ but for many reasons France cannot undertake to establish a number proportionally as great, if the French universities are to be really viable. A half-dozen will suffice. As is well said by M. Liard :

If they are to survive, the universities of France should not be formed by the sudden and general transformation of all the groups of Faculties : universities should be established only at those places where from the Faculties themselves teaching bodies can be formed worthy of this name and of the advantages which it carries with it.

This conclusion is very just. From the principle here laid down, however, we must logically infer, not only that the

¹[One-third of which, in our opinion, might be suppressed with advantage. — EDS.]

weaker groups of Faculties should be refused the name of universities, but that they should be suppressed; and such a proposition would be theoretically justifiable. In order to insure the healthy growth of the main branches of a tree, do we not cut off the smaller branches which absorb sap and life without gain to the whole? Cropping of off-shoots is a process recommended in arboriculture.

The authors of the plan had drawn this inference. At heart they desired the death of the "little" Faculties for the well-being of the "great" ones; but they did not dare openly to demand the suppression of any Faculties, because they were sure that they would arouse the furious hostility of the centers where the suppressions must occur. They did not perceive, however, — and in this lies their shortsightedness, — that this hostility would be scarcely less, if, instead of death pure and simple, they offered to the "little" Faculties conditions of a miserable, humiliating and commonplace life. This has actually been the result of the attitude they assumed. On the one side the deputies of the cities where the "little" Faculties are located, have violently opposed the bill; on the other side its friends have been embarrassed by the effort to defend an unnatural combination. They have been obliged throughout to affirm their solicitude for the "inferior" Faculties which, had they been able, they would gladly have destroyed.

To recapitulate: the discontented, the Catholics, the Jacobins, the friends of the special schools, the champions of the "little" Faculties — all united against the bill. The last named held the balance of power. It would have cost little to satisfy them. They desired the establishment of fifteen universities, of which only six or seven — Paris, Bordeaux, Lyons, Toulouse, Montpellier, Lille, Nancy — would have been really strong universities. The others would have vegetated; but would that have been a serious calamity? They might possibly have grown stronger in time; if not, they would ultimately have withered and disappeared.

The present status of the question of universities in France may be summed up as follows: Universities are in process of

growth ; the name is still denied them ;¹ but they are developing slowly and irresistibly, like the spontaneous creations of nature. They will have their day, and the consequences of their advent over the ruins of the special schools are difficult to forecast ; but it is certain that the consequences will be important. The France which the world has known for a century is the France which was cast in the iron mould of the Napoleonic system — a system which banished liberty, free thought and science. Should the emancipated youth of France be soon admitted, as everything indicates that they will be, to the enjoyment of the high intellectual culture which has been the source of the power of Germany, it will avail more than a battle won for the restoration of our country to its rank among the nations.

PARIS, FRANCE.

CH. V. LANGLOIS.

¹ Since this article was written, a minister of public instruction, M. Charles Dupuy, has secured the insertion in the *loi de finances* of the following section : "The body formed by the union of several State Faculties in any single city is invested with civil personality" — *i.e.*, enjoys the rights of a corporation. Each Faculty has possessed these rights since 1885 ; now, since 1893, each body of united Faculties, represented by an elected council, has the power of receiving and managing property. "If among these bodies," says M. Liard, "there are true universities, time will distinguish them from the rest, reveal their character and secure for them their proper name."

As a result of this measure, the question of establishing universities in France has slumbered for a year. France now has universities, which lack only the legal right so to style themselves. The reform movement is at present centered on the vital problem of changing the system of examinations — of freeing masters and students from the old programs which still impede scientific education and production in our Faculties (*cf.* above, pp. 529-530). Scientific freedom, *Lehr- und Lernfreiheit*, — a matter far more important, indeed, than the name of university, — this is what the French Faculties, we hope, are on the point of deserving and obtaining.